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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1739
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1692
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1723
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1684
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1627
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1680
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1486
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1466
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1261
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1662
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1710
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS 1021
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 9577
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SUBJECT: TAJIK-UZBEK TENSIONS GROWING IN GAS, WATER AND COUNTER
TERRORISM

REF: DUSHANBE 275

DUSHANBE 00001463 001.2 OF 002

11. SUMMARY AND COMMENT: In the last six weeks, the Tajik media has reported on a series of small incidents, the sum of which suggest that the already fractious relationship between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is not getting smoother, despite the hopes raised when Uzbekistan joined the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) in January. Gas, water, crime and terrorism, pollution and student visas have all recently been sources of bilateral tension. Moreover, President Rahmonov publicly became more critical of Uzbekistan's failure to fulfill its membership obligations in EurAsEC. Taken separately, none of these issues seriously threatens regional stability. However, a pattern of constant squabbling over minor topics--as well as serious disagreements over water and gas -- could lead to more intense rhetoric or actions, possibly making regional transport and trade all the more difficult. END COMMENT.

GAS

12. Uzbekistan's natural gas supply company Uztransgaz limited gas supplies to Tajikistan around June 19 due to more than \$7 million in outstanding debts. Press reports quote state-owned utility Tojkgaz head Shavkat Shoimov saying Tajikistan could not repay its debt due to low collection rates. Shoimov called Tajikistan's largest industrial enterprises the biggest problems; Tojkcement alone owes Tojkgaz \$2 million.

13. Another news report stated July 24 that in response to Uzbekistan cutting the delivery of natural gas to Tajikistan, Tajikistan blocked a pipeline transporting gas across Tajikistan to the Uzbek part of Ferghana Valley. The report listed Tojkgaz's debts to Uztransgaz as \$7.63 million accumulated over

half a year, according to a representative of Uztransgaz. He noted that Uztransgaz, having supplied gas to Tajikistan in a volume of 347 million cubic meters for \$19.88 million only received \$11.46 million.

WATER

¶4. In Ferghana valley, Tajikistan was unable to satisfy Uzbekistan's water demand, Tajik Minister of Land Reclamation and Water Resources Abdukokhir Nazirov announced July 17. Tajikistan's Kairakkum reservoir had not yet reached its full capacity due to a delay of water from the Kyrgyz Toqtogul reservoir; therefore, Tajikistan could not provide Uzbekistan with 600 cubic meters per second without threatening Tajik water demand. Nazirov blamed the Kazakh and Kyrgyz governments for implementing agreements too slowly on water transfer from Toqtogul reservoir in exchange for gas and coal supplies for a Kyrgyz power station. Nazirov commented during a press conference that it would be "incorrect" to link Tajikistan-Uzbekistan water regulation to gas supply issues.

TERRORISM

¶5. Tajik Interior Minister Khumdin Sharipov announced July 17 that in the first six months of 2006, Tajik authorities arrested 10 suspected members of the terrorist organization Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), after a special operation in the northern city of Khujand. These arrests included four suspected IMU members involved in November 2005 and January 2006 shootings in Sughd region. July 26 Sughd police allegedly arrested a top IMU figure, 30-year old Uzbek citizen, Ruslan Haqberdiyev, on charges of organizing criminal activities and inciting ethnic and religious enmity. Media reports claimed police confiscated texts in English, Arabic and Uzbek on jihad as well as how to organize explosions.

¶6. According to press reports, Uzbek authorities claimed June

DUSHANBE 00001463 002.2 OF 002

26 to have arrested a Tajik Spy in southern Uzbekistan. Uzbek authorities detained Murodollo Jurayev in early June for violating his visa, but alleged he was a drug trafficker, given a special mission by the Tajik Ministry of Interior to recruit people to carry out terrorist attacks on Uzbek territory. Tajik police dismiss the claims as unfounded.

STUDENTS

¶7. A news agency reported June 23 that Tajik Pedagogical institute expelled 50 Uzbek students for lack of visas; in fact, the students had visas but did not have stamps from a border crossing checkpoint. Later statements by university and Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials stated the students could continue to study, provided they "brought their documents in order." Aside from an outraged article on the Uz-press.info website, no further reports of student visa issues made the press.

POLLUTION

¶8. Uzbekistan has long complained about air and water pollution from TadAZ, Tajikistan's biggest industrial enterprise, a state-owned aluminum smelter located a few miles west of the Uzbek-Tajik border. A July 21 article in an Uzbek language regional newspaper accused TadAZ of poisoning the environment, calling the emissions an "aggression against Uzbekistan." According to an Uzbek environmental organization, TadAZ emitted 600,000 tons of pollutants in the past several years; 60 tons were hydrogen fluoride, which caused diseases in humans, animals and plants. The report added that the incidence of growth and endocrine diseases and of anemia among children under 14 has grown by two to eight times in recent years (reftel).

EURASIAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

¶9. According to multiplesources, Tajik President Rahmonov

openly argued with Uzbek President Karimov at the EurAsEC meeting in Minsk June 23, reminding Uzbekistan of its obligations to eliminate the need for visa for citizens of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Despite joining EurAsEC in January, Uzbekistan has failed to implement many of the organization's required policies.

TRAINS AND TRANSPORT

¶10. Vladimir Sotkalov, Deputy Chief, Tajik Railroad, told Embassy staff that Uzbekistan holds up Tajik trains transiting Uzbek territory. He pointed out that almost all trains are detained in Uzbek territory for more than 5 hours, thus fully changing the schedule. He added that the issue will be discussed at the CIS Heads of Rail Roads meeting in Yerevan in October.

HOAGLAND